

## **MINUTES**

### **NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION**

**May 7, 2015**

**MSU Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health  
4125 Beaumont Road, Lansing 48910**

#### **Present for the Natural Resources Commission**

John Matonich, chair  
J.R. Richardson, vice-chair  
Vicki Pontz  
Rex Schlaybaugh  
Christine Crumbaugh

#### **Present for DNR Staff**

Keith Creagh, DNR director  
Marc Miller, DNR regional initiatives deputy  
Bill Moritz, DNR natural resources deputy  
Mark Hoffman, DNR chief administrative officer  
Peter Manning, legal counsel, Office of the Attorney General  
Dennis Knapp, DNR chief of staff  
Cheryl Nelson, executive assistant to the NRC

#### **COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

Chairman John Matonich called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 3:10 p.m. Matonich made a statement to clarify that NRC members are all in agreement with eliminating the option to close the deer hunting season in the Upper Peninsula on Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 5 of 2015.

**Parks and Trails Update**, Ron Olson, chief of the Parks and Recreation division updated commissioners on a \$325,000 federal grant the department recently received that will be matched by \$325,000 in general fund dollars from the state. The money will be used to improve athletic facilities at Belle Isle State Park. Recreation Passport sales remain up, as do camp night reservations, Ron said. Ron also announced a recent award from the Detroit Free Press that the Parks division received for being a "Green Leader." He also shared that they will begin working on recruitment next week to hire a statewide trail coordinator, in addition, they will be hiring a harbor specialist working statewide to work with harbors of safe refuge, and work with the communities on a more direct basis.

**Scorecard Report**, **John Cherry**, Executive division reviewed the department scorecard with the commission, going over the license restructuring scorecard in some detail.

**Oil and Gas Lease Auction Update**, **Tracie Bonner**, acting supervisor of the Mineral Management section, reported on the recent auction, which brought in \$1.2 million for public recreation in the state.

**Chesapeake Settlement**, **Peter Manning**, legal counsel from the Office of Attorney General, summarized the issue regarding bid-rigging in 2010 with Chesapeake and noted that it has been wrapped up. He also shared that the settlement from the Anti-trust violations in the amount of \$5 million settlement from Encana and a \$25 million settlement from Chesapeake.

**Wildlife Council Update**, Chairperson Carol Rose announced the selection of a marketing firm to educate the public on the benefits that hunting, fishing and trapping provide for natural resources. The council is expecting to ink a contract with Gud Marketing of Lansing by May 18, which means a public information effort will soon be launched.

**Public Land Strategy**, natural resources deputy, **Bill Moritz**, updated the commission on public lands in Michigan. Several bills are currently before the Legislature that would affect public lands. Bill reviewed the effects of some of that legislation as well as issues surrounding state-managed public land. He said the department will continue to protect special places for current and future generations while also evaluating our portfolio to make sure we have the right public lands in the right places.

**Partners in Conservation Award**, Representative **Potvin** shared a tribute for the city of Cadillac and noted that he is proud of how the city and the department have been able to work together. He thanked the DNR for working with the city of Cadillac. The city of Cadillac representative, **Marcus Peccia**, received the Partners in Conservation Award for the work it does with the Parks and Recreation division. Among other things, the city has a Memorandum of Understanding with the department to maintain one mile of the Fred Meijer White Pine Trail State Park. The city does the maintenance free of charge to the state.

**Trout Trails Initiative**, **Jim Dexter** and **Suzanne Ebright**, of Fisheries talked about Michigan Trout Trails -- information the division is putting together to promote the state's nationally recognized trout streams. A new web page, which will be mobile-friendly, will provide detailed descriptions and photos for specific trout waters, as well as information on area lodging, restaurants and guide services. The page will also provide information on trout species available, regulations and other noteworthy information. The division will start with a few areas of the state with plans to expand.

**State Game Area Blue Ribbon Advisory Group**, **Marc Miller**, regional initiatives deputy, talked about the new State Game Area Blue Ribbon Advisory Group. There currently are a total of nine persons on the panel, and the scope of this panel will be to review the role and importance of the state game areas and provide a vision for the future. The panel is co-chaired by William Demmer and Dan Eichinger. The timeframe for this panel will be 18 months. The first meeting will be held in the near future where they will discuss how to get stakeholders involved in this process.

**Deer Regulations**, **Chad Stewart**, deer specialist, Wildlife division, recapped the six options for possible deer hunting reductions in the UP. Option 1-no change, option 2, close the deer season in the Upper Peninsula (UP); option 3-eliminate combo license and antlerless archery option on regular deer license, this turns UP into 1-buck only zone. He talked about unintentional violations, as many hunters come from Lower Peninsula. Option 4, eliminating antlerless hunting during archery season; option 5-eliminates antlerless option during late archery season; option 6-eliminate liberty and independence hunts.

**Legislative Report**, **Trevor VanDyke**, Legislative and Legal Affairs Office Director, provided a written report of legislation related to the department. In addition to the written report **VanDyke** provided updates on recent legislative highlights.

### **PUBLIC APPEARANCES**

(**Dennis Knapp** read the official timekeeping procedures and guidelines for the meeting's public appearances which began at 4:15 p.m.)

**Tony Demboski**, president, Upper Peninsula Sportsmen's Alliance (UPSA), gave the commission an update on the UPSA. It is made up of 62 organizations and businesses, and has a total of 26,400 members. The purpose of the organization is to be the voice of the UP sportsmen and to work with state, federal and other agencies to encourage conservation and management of the natural resources.

**Rory Mattson/Dale McNamee**, UPSA, believe that deer herd is at all-time low. Habitat is the answer, but it's long-term, and there are currently 57 priority areas for winter range and early successional management that are very important. They also shared what they would like to see done in the short-term including requesting the 400,000 acres purchased with game funds in the UP be managed primarily for game species, not just wildlife, retaining current shoot-on-sight coyote regulations or expand for the entire year, and as soon as wolves are delisted they would like the NRC to authorize a season to take at least one-third of the estimated population. They also asked for one buck (all seasons), and to shorten the season in December with no hunting after muzzle-loading season.

**Dean Hall**, past president, Michigan Bowhunter's Association, shared some concerns and suggestions of the Association. One suggestion is that no antlerless deer be harvested (for all seasons) until the herd recovers in the UP. They would also like to see a separate crossbow archery season in the UP as a pilot program. There are members concerns about getting the antlerless option back; at what point would the commission consider the UP to be recovered.

**Alan Ettehofer**, chairman, UP Whitetails, shared copies of the membership vote and written comments concerning some of the problems in the UP with the deer numbers dropping. He talked about the feeding programs that were used in the western part of the UP. The association would like to work together with the department and the commission for better management and habitat and recreational time for the general public of the state.

**Jerry Keck**, Michigan Longbow Association, stated that he hunts often in Marquette County and has seen the impact of the hard winters on deer. He has concerns regarding the archery season with crossbow hunters. He would like to see longbow archery and crossbow seasons run concurrently.

**John Idema** came before the commission to discuss his thoughts about the wolf. He asked that there never be a wolf hunt in the state. He does not believe that management requires killing, and proposed that wolves be relocated.

**Brian Reynolds**, from UP Whitetails of Marquette, thinks that option 4 of Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 5 is the most important thing we can do in the UP right now. He told the commissioners to save the deer and show the hunters in the UP that they are willing to do something to help the deer herd.

**Mike Taylor**, also from UP Whitetails of Marquette, shared that in the UP it's about deer and turkey hunting. It's a way of life in the UP and they need help from the department. He would like to see a halt to shooting antlerless deer, a year-round coyote season, and no deer season after muzzle-loading season.

**Millard Holton** shared his concerns with the small game regulations, saying that he is disappointed in some elements of the platform hunting section of Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 3. He suggests that the commission prohibit shooting upward into a tree from a raised platform.

**Knox Williams** from American Suppressors Association shared a handout with the commission showing which states allow hunting with a suppressor. It is legal to own a suppressor in Michigan, but not to hunt with. He spoke of the benefits of suppressors and noted that they are not silent, they are simply mufflers for firearms. He invited the commission to stop by the suppressor demonstration to be held at Rose Lake on Friday, May 8.

**Amy Trotter**, MUCC, speaking on behalf of their affiliate, the Michigan Sharptail Grouse Association, they support Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 3 for additional access for sharptail hunters. In regard to the platform discussion, they are looking for opportunities to expand where possible. Regarding the land transaction in Charlevoix County, MUCC supports the acquisition. After today's caucus breakfast, there was the first meeting of the Legislative Sportsman's Advisory Council, made up of stakeholders that will work with co-chairs of the caucus. Dan Eichinger is the chair of the group, vice chair is Dennis Eyde.

**Chairman Matonich adjourned the public appearances portion of the meeting at 5:25 p.m. and called to order the regular meeting of the NRC at 5:26 p.m. He noted that all commissioners who were present at the Committee of the Whole were present for the regular meeting.**

#### **REGULAR MEETING OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION**

#### **FOR INFORMATION ONLY NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION**

#### **Deer Harvest Reductions in the Upper Peninsula, Wildlife Conservation Order No. 5 of 2015**

#### **NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION ACTION ITEMS**

#### **Approval of Minutes, April 9, 2015 Natural Resources Commission Meeting**

Commissioner Crumbaugh made a motion that the minutes of the April 9, 2015, NRC meeting be approved. Commissioner Pontz supported the motion. Matonich called for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

#### **Small Game and Upland Game Birds Regulations, Wildlife Conservation Order No. 3 of 2015**

Commissioner Schlaybaugh moved that Wildlife Conservation Order No. 3 of 2015, Small Game and Upland Game Birds Regulations be adopted. Commissioner Crumbaugh supported the motion. Matonich called for discussion, there being none a vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

#### **Bear Damage Shooting Permit Regulations, Wildlife Conservation Order No. 4 of 2015**

Commissioner Schlaybaugh moved that Wildlife Conservation Order No. 4 of 2015, Bear Damage Shooting Permit Regulations be adopted. Commissioner Richardson supported the motion. Matonich called for discussion, Crumbaugh supports adopting regulation, but questions if the department has plans to get permit holders and license holders together so that it is

effective. Chief Mason will report on this later in the year. A vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

### **DIRECTOR – FOR INFORMATION ONLY AND ACTION ITEMS**

Director Creagh listed the “for information only” items listed on the agenda.

Director Creagh then listed the “director’s action” items listed on the agenda and indicated he would approve all items.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries** Schlaybaugh briefly summarized the three primary fisheries issues discussed by Dexter; study of how to better reduce harvest limits for steelhead in rivers, control chumming in key steelhead rivers and he brought the commission up-to-date on drain commission activities not properly coordinated between the department and DEQ.

Wildlife spent considerable time dealing with deer regulations and the Deer Management Plan Update, how hunters are viewing experience, trying to identify early trends in future management activities. Regarding the UP options, the committee came away with recommendation to consider two of the options, option 1-no action necessary and option 4-basically eliminates option to take antlerless deer on combination tag, however, there will be no changes to antlerless quotas in areas where there is high agricultural content. This will be presented next month for the commission to discuss and decide upon. He noted that the Wolf Management Plan Update will be ready for the director’s signature next month. They received an interesting report on cormorant control, an update on the white-nosed syndrome in bats and an update on the division’s Guiding Principles and Strategies.

Schlaybaugh moved that Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 5 be revised by the department from 6 options to 1; option 4, which changes application of tags both combo and single tags. Pontz seconded the motion. Matonich called for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

**NRC Marketing, Partnership, Youth and Outreach Committee** Commissioner Crumbaugh gave the commission a summary of the morning’s meeting, indicating that that they discussed the DNR marketing approach, consumer trends and research and Parks and Recreation marketing and promotions. They discussed the priorities for 2015. Good conversation on social media, with emphasis on putting You-Tube videos together for the past 24 months.

### **COMMISSIONER REPORTS**

Commissioner Pontz attended all-staff meeting at Kellogg Center, noting that it was really inspiring. She also attended a meeting with Marc Miller regarding agro-tourism and outdoor recreation for economic development opportunities, and she is learning how to become a fly fisher person thanks to MSU's Fisheries Department.

Commissioner Schlaybaugh enjoyed meeting with Matonich, staff, and Farm Bureau on the DMAP pilot. Opening of trout season was several days previous, he attended many open houses at stores, etc., in the Grayling area.

Chairman Matonich attended many meetings during the month of April with various sporting groups, in Escanaba, Iron Mountain, White Pine, Lansing, and Imlay City.

Matonich also noted that the next meeting agenda will be changed, committee reports will be given and discussed during the Committee of the Whole.

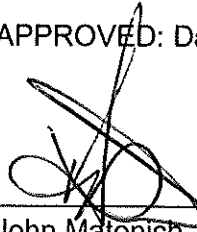
### **Next Meeting**

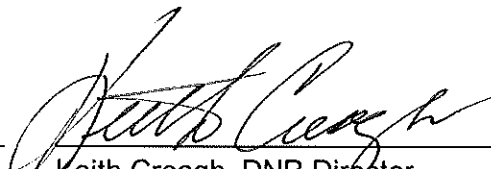
Chairman Matonich announced that the next meeting of the NRC is scheduled for Thursday, June 11, 2015, at the Quality Inn, 1225 North Dixie Highway, Monroe. Committees meeting in June will be the Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee and the NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries.

### **Adjournment**

Commissioner Schlaybaugh made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Crumbaugh seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

APPROVED: Date: 6/11/15

  
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John Matonich, NRC Chairman

  
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Keith Creagh, DNR Director